WHY FUSS ABOUT THESE QUIRKS OF THE VERNACULAR?
Propositional Attitude Sentences in Prior's *Nachlass*
Pre-prints

Abstract (161 words):
In English, in order to speak about Arthur's attitudes, we use sentences like
    Arthur believes that natural language is messy.
For sentences of this kind we have a *standard theory*, according to which the 'that'-clause 'that natural language is messy' denotes a proposition. As Prior showed for the first time, the standard theory appears to be at odds with some linguistic data. Geach and Prior both assumed that linguistic data are to be taken as reliable guides to a correct semantic account and I will start by raising some worries concerning their methodology. Because of these data, Prior and Geach suggested some non-standard accounts. I will then show that if we take linguistic data seriously, their non-standard accounts do not fare any better than the standard theory.

My general conclusion will thus not only be that Prior's and Geach's methodology is disputable, but also that their conclusions do not seem to follow even if we grant the reliability of their methodology.

In English, in order to speak about Arthur's attitudes, we use sentences like
    Arthur believes that natural language is messy.
For sentences of this kind we have a *standard theory*, according to which the 'that'-clause 'that natural language is messy' denotes a proposition and the sentence is true if Arthur stands in a belief relation toward that proposition. As Prior showed for the first time and as it has been stressed again recently, the standard theory appears to be at odds with some linguistic data. Geach and Prior both assumed that linguistic data are to be taken as reliable guides to a correct semantic account and in this paper I will start by raising some worries concerning their methodology (§1).

Because of these data, Prior and Geach suggested some non-standard accounts. I will show that if we take linguistic data seriously, their non-standard accounts do not fare any better than the standard theory: their accounts too appear to be at odds with some data (§2-3).

Finally, because of the data, Prior famously concluded both that propositional attitude sentences do not express the holding of a relation between the subject and the object of the attitude and that quantification in 'that'-clause position is non-objectual. I will show that both conclusions are unwarranted (§4-5).

My general conclusion will thus not only be that Prior's and Geach's methodology is disputable, but also that their conclusions do not seem to follow even if we grant the reliability of their methodology.

1. PRIOR'S AND GEACH'S METHODOLOGY

The standard theory of propositional attitude sentences, such as

Arthur believes that natural language is messy,

is the conjunction of the following related but distinct theses:

a) 'that'-clauses are syntactic units
b) they are singular terms
c) they always denote entities of the same kind
d) those entities are propositions.

We do not need here to spell out in detail the different notions. For our purposes an intuitive grasp should suffice, and however the difficult cases are to be accommodated, the difference between syntactic and non-syntactic units is the difference between 'Arthur', 'the first prime number', 'ate' on the one hand and 'gave me while' or 'and nice' on the other. Singular terms are, roughly, those units that purport to denote one thing. From the four theses it follows that in both

Arthur believes that natural language is messy

Arthur fears that natural language is messy

'that natural language is messy' denotes a proposition. The proposition is usually taken to be what Arthur believes and fears, so that the sentences are taken to express the holding of a relation (of belief or of fear) between Arthur and that proposition (Schiffer 2003: 12-18).

The standard theory originated in the works of medieval Aristotelian commentators and since then philosophers mostly tried to understand what exactly propositions are, without calling the theory into question (Boh 1993). Peter Geach and Arthur Prior are among the few exceptions to this general trend and they developed their non-standard accounts exactly because of their dissatisfaction with the standard theory[1]. For as Prior (1971: 14-16) noted, and as it has been stressed again recently (Moltmann 2003; Rosefeldt 2008), the standard theory appears to be at odds with some linguistic data. For example we have the following puzzling datum (No SUBSTITUTIVITY): 'to fear' can be followed by 'that'-clauses, names, definite descriptions, general terms. For example, we can fear that natural language is messy, we can fear dogs, we can fear Peter, and we can fear the future. According to the standard theory, 'that natural language is messy' denotes the proposition that natural language is messy. If the theory were correct, the following,

Arthur fears that natural language is messy

Arthur fears the proposition that natural language is messy,

would then have to share their truth-conditions, but they do not: the first ascribes to Arthur a fear that natural language is messy, the second an unusual instance of *propositional phobia*, so that the first may be true even if Arthur is perfectly at peace with propositions and, conversely, the second may be true even if Arthur has no problems with the messiness of natural language.

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[1] They discussed the theory several times in a correspondence which started in the Fifties and ended only with Prior's death. The theory was, as Geach said, an "old wrangle of ours" (1966a).

Because of data like this, Geach and Prior both thought that at least one of the theses composing the standard theory had to be rejected. But are these genuine problems? Linguistic data should be handled with care and it is not obvious that they always constitute reliable guides to a correct semantic account. For example, in English we say

Arthur hopes that natural language will be understood;

but when 'to hope' is not followed by a 'that'-clause, a 'for' is grammatically needed:

Arthur hopes *for* Peter.

This datum may be taken to show that 'that'-clauses are not singular terms, exactly because with them a 'for' is not needed. But, as Prior himself put it, this datum merely shows "minor idiosyncrasies which do not seriously impinge the appropriateness" (?a, 106) of the standard theory. Prior does not say why this datum should be simply dismissed, but the reason seems clear. The grammaticality of a sentence depends also on merely syntactic features of words, which may have nothing to do with their semantic characteristics (Hofweber 2006: 216-217). Are we sure that NO SUBSTITUTIVITY is not to be similarly explained away? Prior and Geach did not discuss this point and the only remark in this direction is in a letter by Geach, in which he asks Prior (and us) not to react by saying "Why fuss about these quirks of the vernacular?" (1961). But why should we not react in that way? Natural language is indeed messy. Take

Being smart is the property of being smart

*The property of being smart is being smart.

Only the first is grammatical, but it seems hardly justifiable to hold that therefore 'being smart' and 'the property of being smart' make different semantic contributions in the two sentences[2]. Similarly, take

I know a bargain when I see one

I know some bargain when I see one.

Only the first can be understood as meaning that I recognise a bargain as such when I see it. Should we conclude that there is a semantic difference between 'a bargain' and 'some bargain'? Surely we can, but we can also explain the datum away, by holding that what a sentence can be taken to mean depends not just on the semantic characteristics of the words occurring in it, but also on the way in which we are used to employing certain phrases (Schnieder 2006).

Thus one might reject Prior's and Geach's approach to the semantics of propositional attitude sentences right from the start, by simply denying that the methodology they used is reliable: one may urge that natural language is messy, and we should not fuss about its quirks (Schiffer 2003: 93-96). But, as I will show, even stronger conclusions can be drawn. For it seems that Geach and Prior were too quick in drawing their conclusions *even if* we grant that linguistic data should be taken seriously. Let us start from Geach.

2. GEACH'S CHANGE OF GEAR

Of the theses composing the standard theory, Geach always endorsed theses
a) 'that'-clauses are syntactic units
b) they are singular terms
so that his rejection of the theory had to do with theses
c) they always denote entities of the same kind

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[2] Thanks to Max Cresswell for suggesting this example.

d) those entities are propositions.

There is a difference in how he rejected these theses in the published work and in his letters to Prior. Famously, in his published works (1957: 75-92; 1972), Geach accepted c) but rejected d), by holding that 'that'-clauses denote sentences[3]. According to this proposal, in both

> Arthur believes that natural language is messy
>
> Arthur fears that natural language is messy

reference is made to the sentence "Natural language is messy". Geach's reasons for this view were methodological and ontological: propositions are *creatures of the darkness*, so that a semantic account should not employ them (1965a: 449; 1972: 168). But, as Prior noticed, this account is obviously at odds with No Substitutivity:

> "A man might perhaps in some odd mood or condition fear sentences as he fears dogs – if Robinson Crusoe had seen not a footstep but the inscription 'The cat in on the mat' written in the sand, it might have set him trembling – but this is quite a different matter; such a man … might fear the sentence 'The cat is on the mat' without fearing that the cat is on the mat"[4].

But in his letters to Prior, Geach focused instead on c) and rejected it by repeating several times that "there is a gear-change" (1963a; 1963b; 1966a; 1966b) in the contribution of the 'that'-clause in

> Arthur believes that natural language is messy
>
> Arthur fears that natural language is messy.

According to the Geach of the letters, 'that'-clauses denote entities of different kinds in the context of different predicates (1966b):

> "It seems to me that <u>that</u> clauses fall into at least two classes: according as ⌜that ⌝ is naturally replaceable by ⌜the Proposition that ⌝ or rather by ⌜this state of affairs, that ⌝. Thus: to the first group these belong: ⌜it is true, probable, implausible that ⌝, ⌜believes, suspects, asserts, denies, that ⌝, etc. To the second group these belong: ⌜it is good, unfortunate, convenient that ⌝, ⌜ brought it about that ⌝, ⌜ is delighted that ⌝ … Knowledge relates to Propositions, will to states of affairs."[5]

According to this suggestion, in

> Arthur fears that natural language is messy

the 'that'-clause denotes a state of affairs, while in

> Arthur believes that natural language is messy

it denotes a proposition[6]. This proposal is clearly in accordance with No Substitutivity. For on this account

> Arthur fears that natural language is messy
>
> Arthur fears the proposition that natural language is messy

are to be expected to have different truth-conditions, given that, so to say, the wrong kind of entity has been chosen. If a factual entity is chosen, the sentences have in fact the same truth-conditions:

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[3] I am not following Geach's own terminology. Geach 1972: 168 distinguished between *Propositions* and *propositions*: *Propositions* are the abstract creatures of the darkness, while *propositions* are sentences taken together with their meanings. Using his terminology, his account is in terms of *propositions*.

[4] Prior 1971: 14-15. Geach 1972: 172-173 recognized this as a difficulty.

[5] Geach 1963b adds: "I have now, I think, better reasons (than that I seemed to hear the logical gears crushingly changed) for segregating the <u>that</u> clauses after "verbs of saying and thinking" as grammarians say from those after 'prevent', 'bring about', etc. and verbs for <u>pro</u> and <u>contra</u> attitudes. But my views haven't crystallized out yet". These *better reasons* cannot unfortunately be found either in the published or unpublished works.

[6] For a more recent, similar account, see Parsons 1993.

Arthur fears that natural language is messy

Arthur fears the state of affairs that natural language is messy.

Is Geach's account in accordance with all linguistic data? Unfortunately, it is not. Since on this account 'that'-clauses, although ambiguous, are singular terms, the account is, together with the standard theory, at odds with the following datum (UNGRAMMATICALITY OF IDENTITY): sentences

*That natural language is messy is that natural language is messy

*That natural language is messy is identical to/with that natural language is messy

*That natural language is messy and that natural language is messy are the same

are all ungrammatical. Thus, at least in many cases, 'that'-clauses cannot flank identity predicates[7]. Now, as Prior among many told us[8], "the category of individuals is marked off precisely by being the argument of a genuine and irreducible identity function" (1963a: 192). For the role of identity predicates is to equate two objects and the role of singular terms is exactly to provide us with objects. Therefore it is to be expected that the language evolved so that any singular term is able to flank identity. But 'that'-clauses, at least often, cannot.

It is quite difficult to believe that Geach, who worked on identity all through his career, did not consider these sentences, but to be fair to him it should be noted that there is a general lack of literature on them and Prior too disregarded these sentences. Because Geach did not consider UNGRAMMATICALITY OF IDENTITY, he did not recognize that also his account appears to be at odds with some linguistic data and therefore that if we take linguistic data seriously, then it is not better off, as a semantic account, than the standard theory. So, to Prior's account.

3. PRIOR'S ESSENTIAL TRICK

Prior did suffer from propositional phobia and his aim was to account for propositional attitude sentences without the aid of propositions. In his published works, Prior's main aim was to build a logic, and the legend tells us that Prior was not interested at all in natural language, which he took to be full of "idiotisms of idiom" (Geach 1975: 154). But in 1964 he gave to a bunch of friends a typescript, which is now published posthumous as his *Objects of Thought*, in which he clearly focused on natural languages: in it, he pays a lot of attention to what we say or do not say in English, he discusses idioms and looks for comparisons with other natural languages. There[9] and in other published or unpublished works (1963a; 1963b; 1963c; 1964; 1968; 1971: 19-20; 1976: 26-32), he held that the standard theory cannot be accepted, because of NO SUBSTITUTIVITY and because (1971: 19-20; also 1976: 26-32)

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[7] When 'that'-clauses flank only one side of 'is', the sentence is generally grammatical:
That natural language is messy is the most significant proposition in this paper.
One may then hold that 'that'-clauses sometimes can and sometimes cannot flank identity. But one may also instead hold that 'that'-clauses never flank identity and urge that in the cases in which they seem to be able to flank identity, the predicate does not really designate identity. According to Pryor 2007, for example, in the case above in this note 'is' is to be taken to be the so-called *specificational copula*. Thanks to an anonymous referee for raising this issue.

[8] As Geach told us, the relation between identity and singular terms goes back to Frege. For an example on Geach on identity and Frege, but unfortunately not on 'that'-clauses, see Geach 1975.

[9] In a first draft of the typescript of *Objects of Thought*, Prior seems to hold that the standard theory is acceptable for natural languages. He wrote (?a; 106): "Grammatically the word 'that' undoubtedly does have the function of constituting a kind of name or quasi-name out of a sentence. Given the sentence 'grass is green', for example, we can construct the expression 'that grass is green' which may function as the grammatical subject or object of a longer sentence". But this bit disappeared from the typescript.

" 'The proposition that grass is pink is believed by X' means no more and no less than … 'Grass is, in X's opinion, pink' which again is not, and does not even look like, a sentence about the proposition that grass is pink, but looks like, and is, a slightly more complicated sentence about grass (and also about X)".

Not only did Prior hold that the standard theory was incorrect, he also suggested an alternative account, which rejects the standard theory in the most radical way possible. Prior in fact rejected even thesis

a) 'that'-clauses are syntactic units

and maintained that in carving a sentence like

Arthur believes that natural language is messy

at its syntactic joints, we do not obtain 'that natural language is messy' as a unit. According to him the *essential trick* (1971: 24) is to hold that the 'that' should be taken to go with 'believes':

Arthur / believes that / natural language is messy.

Prior recognized that 'believes that' was a kind of sui generis syntactic unit and maintained that it is to be considered as a predicate on the left side - predicating belief of Arthur - and as a connective on the right side - connecting to the sentence "Natural language is messy". Therefore, Prior suggested, the sentence following the 'that' does not denote anything at all, exactly as it does not denote anything in

Logic is rigorous and natural language is messy.

Propositional attitude sentences, therefore, do no express relations between a subject and anything whatever.

Is this account in accordance with all linguistic data? It is clear that this account is in perfect accordance with NO SUBSTITUTIVITY: on this account, in

Arthur fears that natural language is messy

Arthur fears the proposition that natural language is messy

we have, respectively, a hybrid predicate-connective and a predicate. Thus in the first sentence we do not have a singular term denoting a proposition and there are then no reasons why preservation of truth-conditions is to be expected. Moreover, Prior's account is also in perfect accordance with UNGRAMMATICALITY OF IDENTITY: according to Prior, 'that'-clauses are not syntactic units and bits of language that are not syntactic units cannot generally flank identity predicates. The following, for example, are similarly ungrammatical:

*Gave me while is gave me while

*And nice is and nice.

As we already saw, Prior himself did not consider sentences like

*That natural language is messy is that natural language is messy.

This is surprising, in particular considering, first of all, that these sentences are a good point in support of his theory and, secondly, that he instead discussed sentences like

The proposition that natural language is messy is the proposition that natural language is messy,

which are problematic from his point of view. For they apparently show that there are propositions and Prior therefore had to try to explain them away. He suggested (1968: 97-98) that this is merely an apparent identity statement and the 'is' is "a two-place sentential connective forming a sentence from a pair of sentences". This move is certainly questionable, but this is probably a minor problem for Prior in comparison with other issues Prior's account faces. For if we take linguistic data seriously, as Prior does, then his account is obviously and notoriously at

odds with some of those data (Künne 2003: 69). In particular, Prior's account is in conflict with the following datum (SYNTACTIC UNITY): in general, there are some constraints on how the passive form of a construction can be built and how the different bits of a sentence can be rearranged. These constraints are connected with what the syntactic units are that occur in the sentence: in

>Arthur likes his friends,

for example, 'his friends' is a unit because we cannot grammatically rearrange the different bits so that 'his' and 'friends' get separated, as shown by the ungrammaticality of

>*His Arthur likes friends
>*Are liked his by Arthur friends
>*His are liked friends by Arthur.

If we follow Prior, in

>Arthur believes that natural language is messy

'that natural language is messy' is not a unit, while 'believes that' is. But then, if Prior were right, it should not be possible to rearrange the sentence so that 'believes' and 'that' get separated. But, first of all, this is possible, as shown by the grammaticality of

>That natural language is messy is believed by Arthur
>What Arthur believes is that natural language is messy.

Moreover we actually *should* separate 'believes' and 'that', considering that the following

>*Natural language is messy is believed that by Arthur
>*What Arthur believes that is natural language is messy

are ungrammatical. To use an expression Geach (1962) employed in one of his letters to Prior, Prior's essential trick leads to *a butcher's, not surgeon's, work*.

In considering Prior's account, we thus reach the same conclusion as we reached concerning Geach's account: if, with Prior, we take linguistic data seriously, then also Prior's account is at odds with some of them, and as a semantic account it is thus no better than the standard theory[10].

4. PRIOR'S NON-RELATIONAL ACCOUNT

Is it then impossible to cut propositional attitude sentences as a surgeon would do, without being at odds with NO SUBSTITUTIVITY and UNGRAMMATICALITY OF IDENTITY? Let us start again from the standard theory. It consists, among others, of the following theses:

a) 'that'-clauses are syntactic units
b) they are singular terms.

Geach rejected the theory, but endorsed both these theses. If we do not react to linguistic data with the "Why fuss?" stance, because of UNGRAMMATICALITY OF IDENTITY, we need to reject

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[10] In passim, it should be noted that in the unpublished Prior ?b, but only there and deleted also there, Prior found it also "not implausible" to hold, together with the logicians of Port-Royal, that for propositional attitude sentences "the complexity … lies not in the terms but in the copula". According to this account
Arthur believes that natural language is messy
is to be analysed as
Natural language is-believed-by-Arthur-to-be messy.
It is clear that this is, again, at odds with SYNTACTIC UNITY: in
Arthur believes that natural language is messy and Peter too,
'too' can stand for 'believes that natural language is messy', so that 'Arthur' and 'believes' do not go together in a unit.

b). Prior instead rejected both theses[11]. But if we take linguistic data seriously, because of SYNTACTIC UNITY, we need to endorse a). Thus the data show that a) is to be endorsed, while b) discarded, and this is clearly possible: we can reject that 'that'-clauses are that particular kind of units which are singular terms without rejecting that 'that'-clauses are units. What are they then? Here is a proposal. One can hold that in

> Arthur fears that natural language is messy

the 'that'-clause is a quantified phrase, similar to 'a girl', 'something beautiful', so that the sentence expresses that Arthur fears *a that natural language is messy*. An account along these lines was actually suggested by Israel Scheffler (1954: 88)[12]:

> " "J writes that P" may now be analyzed as asserting: "(Ex)(Ey)(x = J . That-Py. Inscribes xy)", where "That-P" is construed as a single predicate of certain concrete inscriptions."

According to Scheffler,

> Arthur fears that natural language is messy

should then be taken as saying that Arthur fears some rephrase of the concrete inscription "Natural language is messy" occurring above. Scheffler's account was known to Prior, who criticized it in his unpublished manuscript leading to *Objects of Thought* (?a, 106). He was dissatisfied with the sententialist aspect of Scheffler's account, and urged that "[i]t would be totally implausible to translate 'Seneca fears that all men are mortal' as 'Seneca fears an asserting-mortality-to-all-men sentence' ". But Prior did not pause to discuss the suggestion that 'that'-clauses are quantified phrases, whether metalinguistic or not, and it is clear that it is not necessary to hold that the clause is metalinguistic in order to hold that it is quantified. Of course, providing an analysis of its meaning is not an easy task. For example, when is it that what Arthur fears is a that natural language is messy? Clearly, holding that the clauses are quantified does not answer in itself all the questions and perhaps the account breaks exactly when questions like this are considered. But for our purposes we luckily do not need to go into these issues, and we should just notice that this account is in fact in perfect accordance with all the data we saw. Prior's account appears to be at odds with SYNTACTIC UNITY because according to Prior 'that'-clauses are not units. But on the account we are considering here 'that'-clauses are units, so that the datum is straightforwardly accounted for. As to NO SUBSTITUTIVITY, i.e. the datum that

> Arthur fears that natural language is messy
> Arthur fears the proposition that natural language is messy

have different truth-conditions, in taking 'that'-clauses as quantified phrases, one can rather naturally explain the datum in the way Geach suggested. For according to this account, since the 'that'-clause 'that natural language is messy' is a quantified phrase, the sentence following the 'that' can be taken to designate something that can be general and true of both states of affairs and propositions. Thus on this account even if we can say both that Arthur believes that natural language is messy and that he fears that natural language is messy, what he fears is the state of affairs that natural language is messy, while what he believes is instead the proposition that natural language is messy. With the aid of an analogy, this account can thus explain NO SUBSTITUTIVITY by holding that even if it can be true both that we touched something beautiful

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[11] Another famous rejection of thesis a) is Russell 1910's multiple relation theory, according to which
Arthur believes that natural language is messy
should be taken to express a multiple relation holding among Arthur, language and the property of being messy. Clearly, also Russell's account is at odds with SYNTACTIC UNITY.
[12] More recently, accounts of this kind were suggested by Bach 1997 and Recanati 2004.

and that we organized something beautiful, what we touched was a beautiful statue, while what we organized was instead a beautiful event. Finally, we considered UNGRAMMATICALITY OF IDENTITY, i.e. the datum that sentences like

*That natural language is messy is that natural language is messy

are ungrammatical. Also this datum is now explained. For while identity is reasonably the sign of singular terms, it is not the sign, either positive or negative, of quantified phrases: some quantified phrases can flank identity, as in

Something beautiful is identical to/with something beautiful,

others cannot, as in

*A girl and a girl are the same[13].

As this account illustrates, Prior was too quick not only in concluding that linguistic data show that we should reject thesis

a) 'that'-clauses are syntactic units,

but also in concluding that the linguistic data show that propositional attitude sentences do not express the holding of a relation. For, on the one hand, the quantificational account is in accordance with all the data we considered and, on the other hand, it takes 'that'-clauses to be such that propositional attitude sentences still express the holding of a relation. If Arthur fears that natural language is messy, then Arthur fears *something.* That something is not denoted by the 'that'-clause, but it is still something[14].

5. PRIOR'S NON-OBJECTUAL QUANTIFIERS

The account just presented, according to which 'that'-clauses are quantified phrases, shows something also concerning another topic beloved by Geach (1972) and Prior (1971): quantification in 'that'-clause position. From

Arthur fears that natural language is messy

it seems that we can deduce

Arthur fears something.

Geach saw the quantifiers as objectual. Since he did not want an ontological commitment to propositions, in his published works he developed the sententialist account we alluded to (1972). As we saw, according to Prior, instead, propositional attitude sentences do not express the holding of a relation, so that there is *no thing* Arthur fears when he fears that natural language is

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[13] On the standard account of definite descriptions, also definite descriptions are quantified phrases. If this is correct, then definite descriptions are another example of quantified phrases that can flank identity, as shown by the perfect grammaticality of

The proposition that natural language is messy is the proposition that natural language is messy.

Thanks again to an anonymous referee for stressing this point.

[14] One may think that the quantificational account is in conflict with a new datum. For according to this account,

Arthur fears that natural language is messy

should be taken as tantamount to

Arthur fears *a* that natural language is messy,

which is a quantified sentence. One may then think that since the quantifier ranges over the different objects of the attitudes, then in substituting a description for one of those objects I should have to obtain a sentence having the same truth-conditions, but I do not. For example, if Arthur fears that natural language is messy he does not fear a proposition. But this problem is quickly solved by holding that in the context of different predicates, the variables range over objects of different kinds: in the context of 'to fear', over states of affair, while in the context of 'to believe', over propositions.

messy. He then held that the 'something' is non-objectual and showed that in English we have other cases of non-objectual quantification (1971: 33-39). One of his examples is

> He is something I am not, kind,

and this example seems indeed convincing. But, as he himself remarked, when it comes to non-objectual quantification, "there are those whose eyebrows lift" (1968: 94). Now if 'that'-clauses are taken to be quantified phrases, then we do not need to go beyond usual objectual quantifiers[15]: if

> Arthur fears that natural language is messy

is true, then Arthur fears something which is a that natural language is messy, and therefore there is an *object* which Arthur fears, even if it is not denoted by a 'that'-clause. Thus this account shows that Prior was too quick also in concluding that quantification in 'that'-clause position should be non-objectual. For on the account just seen propositional attitude sentences express the holding of a relation, and therefore on this account there is an object of the attitude.

The possibility of relying simply on objectual quantification tells us something concerning this account of 'that'-clauses as quantified phrases not only in comparison with Prior's, but also in comparison with the standard theory. As we saw, according to the standard theory, in

> Arthur fears that natural language is messy

the 'that'-clause denotes a proposition. Therefore the quantifier in

> Arthur fears something

can be simply taken as an objectual quantifier ranging over propositions. The possibility of relying on mere objectual quantifiers is considered to be the primary, if not the only, reason in favour of the standard theory (Salmon 1983: 5-6; Schiffer 2003: 12-14). But the non-standard account according to which 'that'-clauses are quantified phrases is not any worse then: even if the object feared is not the object denoted by the 'that'-clause, still there is an object feared by Arthur when he fears that natural language is messy and the quantifier is the usual objectual one.

<div align="center">CONCLUSION</div>

Should we rely on linguistic data when we aim at providing a correct semantic account of propositional attitude sentences? We can deny that linguistic data are a reliable guide by holding that natural language is indeed messy, full of idiosyncrasies and idiotisms of idiom. If we discard linguistic data, then Prior and Geach did not show that the standard theory is semantically incorrect and it then seems to be on a par with the accounts they suggested. On the other hand, we can follow Geach's suggestion of not taking a "Why fuss?" stance, by urging that in the end it is that messy natural language that we are trying to account for. But even if we take the data seriously, the standard theory is again semantically on a par with their accounts, because neither Prior's nor Geach's account is in accordance with all linguistic data. Moreover, for all the data we considered, there seems to be an account that fares better than both the standard theory and the accounts suggested by Prior and Geach – an account they did not consider. As we saw, on this account, thesis

a) 'that'-clauses are syntactic units

is endorsed, while

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[15] Also Kenny 1963: 145 pointed out to Prior that in taking propositional attitude sentences as quantificational, only objectual quantifiers are needed.

b) they are singular terms

c) they always denote entities of the same kind

d) those entities are propositions

are all rejected. This account respects the vernacular, dominates its messiness with the precision of a surgeon and does that even without making many eyebrows lift.

Therefore no matter whether their methodology is correct, Prior and Geach did not really show that their alternative accounts were semantically better than the standard theory. But they did show that there are alternatives to the standard theory. No matter what we should do with linguistic data and no matter what considerations we should take as relevant, they showed us that the standard theory is not the only option and that instead of endorsing it dogmatically, we had better investigate the alternatives in the logical space.

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